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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 006691

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER PREL EAID ECON PGOV IN PK AF UNGA INDO PAK

SUBJECT: PUSHING INDO-PAK DELIVERABLES FOR UNGA MEETING

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 11438 (NOTAL)

1B. NEW DELHI 5226

1C. NEW DELHI 2994

Classified By: A/DCM Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Although the bonhomie and impressive "to do" list that emerged from the April "cricket summit" (Ref C) gave a palpable boost to Indian perceptions of Indo-Pak relations, the relationship soured in New Delhi's eyes after the GOI reported worsening trends on cross-border infiltration and terrorism that they linked to Pakistan-based groups (Ref B). What is needed now are quick deliverables with robust PR value that demonstrate the resolve of both sides to push the process forward. PM Singh plans to meet with Kashmiri separatist leaders in Delhi on September 5, well before UNGA. Delhi has also been focused on transit rights through Pakistan for its aid to Afghanistan. Movement on these two key barometer issues could help to energize the process and give both sides needed political cover for more difficult steps on benchmark issues like demilitarization of the Siachen Galcier. End Summary.

Dialogue Yielded Incremental Progress, Bonhomie

12. (C) The Second Round of the Composite Dialogue yielded some incremental progress, most notably on codifying nuclear, missile and conventional CBMs. More important, the talks provided a forum to keep Indo-Pak interlocutors engaged with each other to build positive atmospherics. However, absent a periodic breakthrough that galvanizes public support for the process, well-connected columnists such as "Times of India" Foreign Affairs Editor Indrani Bagchi (often mouthpiece for the MEA) lament that the process may grind to a halt. The three prior PR boosts -- resumption of cricket ties, the cross-LoC bus, and Musharraf's Delhi visit -- have now faded from the public's eye, and a new symbol of progress is needed, not a laundry list of someday-deliverables like that which emerged from the cricket summit, but one or two high-level policy initiatives that could be implemented at a pen-stroke and would resonate well at home for both leaders.

GOI Can Offer Serious (if not Substantive) Kashmir Dialogue

13. (C) According to press and our Srinagar contacts, PM Singh plans to meet with Kashmiri separatist leaders in Delhi on September 5, which should give Musharraf a useful Kashmir-oriented deliverable. Our Srinagar contacts tell us that Congress MP Prof. Saifuddin Soz helped clear the way for this meeting to kick-off a GOI dialogue with the separatists. Interestingly, Soz discounted the role of Kashmir activist (and Gandhi family confidant) Wajahat Habibullah in arranging this breakthrough. Separately, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Yasin Malik told us that the PM would not have to lead GOI talks with the separatists as long as a GOI representative with sufficient heft served as their interlocutor. Yasin listed NSA MK Narayanan, D/NSA VK Nambiar, and IB chief ESL Narasimhan as potential representatives with sufficient gravitas. This dialogue will not lead to an immediate, substantial policy change, but the political signal of New Delhi taking the separatists seriously could be packaged as a significant deliverable that President Musharraf could deploy at home. We will encourage our GOI contacts in furtherance of this goal, building on the Prime Minister's oft-stated commitment to reach out to the Kashmiris.

Transit for Afghan Aid Would Win GOI Kudos

14. (C) The PM's recent visit to Afghanistan reminded the GOI of the high cost it faces in shipping Afghan aid through Iran. The incremental easing of Indian agricultural imports to Pakistan (Ref A) could be used as a precedent to renew the GOI request for overland transit through Pakistan. We understand from the Foreign Ministry that the GOP is now allowing transits on a limited basis, but a public declaration by Pakistan would play very well here. To help alleviate any possible suspicion, we could soft-peddle to the MEA any security requirements the GOP might levy, such as inspecting shipments or escorting trucks, in the greater interest of improving the flow of Indian assistance and drastically increasing the value of India's aid to Afghanistan. Pakistani concerns of losing market share in Afghanistan to Indian goods would be answered by allowing

only Indian aid deliveries as a first step. Transit through Pakistan that eliminates the cost of ocean and land transit through Iran would also help reduce the GOI's burgeoning ties with Iran. Incoming MEA Director (Pakistan) Saggar was receptive to these proposals during our August 31 introductory office call.

Comment: Take Two Robust CBMs Every Three Months

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15. (C) These possible deliverables are not glamorous, nor do they solve the "core issues" of terrorism and Kashmir, but they do try to nourish the kernels of confidence that the Composite Dialogue process planted. Many of the topics broached in formal Indo-Pak talks over the past year have proven too politically thorny for either side to concede yet. Without succumbing to the temptation for mediation, we need to help encourage the two sides to find the low-hanging fruit to feed this nascent relationship until it can fend for itself. Progress on the internal Kashmir dialogue or Afghan transit could help to dilute the recent sourness over the issue of cross-border terrorism, and might help to create an environment for the two sides to make progress on the more politically challenging Composite Dialogue topics, such as demilitarization of the Siachen Galcier. End Comment.

16. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:  
(<http://www.state.sgov/p/sa/newdelhi>)

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